

LETTER FROM MONTREAL



## Foreign aid turns to research

**Canada's aim is to help  
developing nations boost  
their own research effort**

by Fred Poland

Two out of three people in the world today live in underdeveloped countries; by 2000 A.D. it will be four out of five.

For 20 years Canada has handed out aid to these countries. At present official and private sources in Canada contribute \$338 million; by 1975 the figure is expected to be \$500 million.

Canada is taking a second look at its methods and priorities in giving aid. It is paying particular attention to the fact that the gap between the low income and wealthier nations is mainly a science and technology gap.

A recent study indicates that some 98 percent of all the world's research and development expenditure continues to be made in the wealthy industrialized nations. The less developed nations need a larger share of the world's scientific and technological resources, or the gap between them and the wealthy nations will increase. One of the most practical methods of giving them a larger share is to devote a portion of the funds available from wealthier nations to build up scientific and technological capability in the less developed nations.

Despite the fact that scientific and technological capability is fundamental to the whole development process, and that this field is a new and complex one, less than one-half of one percent of the aid budgets of donor countries is currently devoted to development research. Compared with this, the average growing corporation in North America spends about six percent of its annual income for these purposes.

The United Nations Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology (ACAST) has proposed that donors be asked to allocate 10 percent of their research and development resources to projects of concern to lower income countries and an additional five percent to help create an institutional infrastructure for science and technology in these countries.

The Canadian Government has decided that this is an area in which Canada can play an important role, according to External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp. He has put before Parliament a plan to establish the International Development Research Center of Canada in Ottawa.

Sharp says the Government will provide at least \$30 million over the first five years for the center, which will have a 21-member board of governors from a number of countries.

Two years of spade work and plan-

ning for the center have been put in by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which runs Canada's foreign aid program. The center could start operating within two months of Parliamentary approval.

The minister says the center will identify, initiate and encourage, support and undertake research into the problems involved in the development of economically deprived regions of the world.

It will seek to develop the most effective application of the results of this research to the needs of the people of those regions. It will give high priority to programs that assist the developing countries to build their own scientific and technological capabilities so that they will not be mere welfare recipients but contributors in their own right to the solution of their own problems.

For example, says Sharp, a program designed to improve the protein content of cereal grains might be spearheaded by a Canadian university with special experience in that field. It would involve a number of other Canadian and non-Canadian organizations, each of which would be engaged in a specific aspect of the work as part of a coordinated program.

After a project has been undertaken, the function of the headquarters group will be to oversee the programs and to audit and disseminate their results. Discussions with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations and some of the U.N. specialized agencies indicate that the center's headquarters might also provide a system for storing, retrieving and disseminating scientific and technical data relevant to international development.

Sharp says it is too early to be specific about the center's programs. Final decisions on program priorities will be reserved to the center's board of governors, but CIDA and ACAST have already indicated several possible areas of special interest: the development of new techniques for identifying and evaluating mineral resources, improved methods of preserving food and reducing waste, which runs as high as 50 percent of what is produced, fostering of efficient industrial techniques to use the many workers available in countries with large labor pools but shortage of capital and know-how, development of genetically improved plants of high protein value and study of some aspects of the world population problem.